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Comment and discussion

"How Many Subs Do We Need?"

(See A. Konetzni, pp. 56-57, November 2000 Proceedings)

Vice Admiral James H. Doyle Jr., U.S. Navy (Retired)-The 1997 **Quadrennial Defense Review (QDR)** math also is flawed when it comes to surface combatant requirements. These requirements should be based on a combination of warfighting and peacetime needs. The ever-widening range of missions includes operating with aircraft carrier battle groups, attacking land targets, supporting amphibious ready groups, defending against cruise and ballistic missiles, conducting antisubmarine warfare (ASW), participating in humanitarian relief, evacuating civilian personnel, conducting maritime interception, training with allies, and deploying forward in all oceans. The 1997 QDR number of 116 surface combatants is now considered high risk for war fighting. In addition, it does not adequately recognize the surface combatant cycle of predeployment workup, deployment, interdeployment training, and maintenance/modernization, as well as the Chief of Naval Operations' policy of 50% time in home port over a five-year period. When combined with inadequate funding for maintenance and spare parts, the result is degraded readiness and a deleterious effect on retention.

The Surface Combatant Force Levels Study II documents that 135 surface combatants are required in the 2015 timeframe. This number, if matched with required capabilities, seems to fit reasonably well with a need for at least 360 ships for three carrier battle groups and associated amphibious ready groups in three forward deployment hubs. At a minimum, 135 probably is reflective of all surface combatant missions and the forward presence cycle as mentioned above. But the 135 number also can be broken down in terms of cruiser and destroyer requirements and capabilities.

With 27 active Aegis cruisers and plans for their conversion, the requirement for 27 multimission cruisers is well documented. This number may increase in the future if new tasks are added, such as participation in national missile defense. In addition to the general surface combatant missions, the specific tasks of land attack, theater air defense, force protection, and command and control, along with matched capabilities, are spelled out. Historically, cruisers have been more heavily armed and instrumented than destroyers and, in many cases, are tasked with different missions. The Aegis cruisers continue this trend, particularly with the added capabilities of theater-wide ballistic missile defense and area air-defense control that are made possible by the flexibility and growth engineered in the initial design. With improvements to their land-attack systems and greater instrumentation, they also can function as strike leaders in offensive operations. Therefore, in the surface combatant force level equation, the requirement and rationale for cruisers and destroyers should each stand on its own justification.

Assuming a requirement for 135 surface combatants that includes 27 cruisers, the remaining requirement should be 108 multimission destroyers, or 100 active destroyers and 8 naval reserve force frigates, if the latter are to remain in the force. DDG-SIs are robust in land attack, air defense, and antisubmarine warfare. They are fully capable of aircraft carrier battle group and amphibious ready group operations, maritime interception, independent missions, and continuous forward presence. With a long-range surveillance and air-defense system, they are able to protect other forces from aircraft and missile attack and deconflict the airspace. This multimission

capability is essential because history has shown that operational flexibility and the capacity to grow are prerequisites to adapting to a variety of threats in an uncertain future.

This flexibility and growth in the initial design of DDG-51s, like the CG-47s, for backfits and forward-fit updates will enable the new capability in area ballistic missile defense (Aegis Baseline 6 Phase III and SM-2 Block IVA). Likewise, the strike- and land-attack capability will be enhanced by tactical Tomahawk and its associated weapon control system and the land-attack Standard missile. Antisubmarine warfare improvements also must be made in the SQS-53 series active sonars, including broadband active, environmental adaptation, and active detection of torpedoes. DDG-51s must be able to participate fully in coordinated operations, and also have the capability to orchestrate the entire ASW evolution of air, surface, and underwater assets. Of particular importance to naval fire support will be the addition of the 5-inch/62 gun, extended range munitions, and eventually the naval fire support system. Embedded in the tactical Tomahawk control system will be the foundation to receive fire support missions from the Army's field artillery tactical data system. This is important because DD-21, the land-attack destroyer, is not scheduled to join the fleet until 2009.

In the current world crisis environment, a surface combatant requirement of 135 would be more realistic and less risky and debilitating than 116. The ability to meet war plans, deployment commitments, training, unplanned contingencies and emergencies, off-line maintenance and modernization, and the CNO's home port policy would improve. The latter is important to the quality of life of crews and their families.

With a new requirement of 27 cruisers and 100 destroyers, we are some 19 multimission destroyers short, even including the single-mission DD-963s and FFGs that eventually will be replaced. We must continue building DDG-51s at the maximum rate feasible each year in the shipbuilding budget with the new capabilities and innovations in land attack, naval fire support, area ballistic missile defense, and ASW. We also must continue modernizing CG-47s to double their service life to add new capabilities in theater-wide ballistic missile defense, land attack, and area air-defense control. These actions are essential to maintain critical core industrial base skills and avoid a severe drop in production, particularly if DD-21 is delayed. In any event, the 1997 QDR surface combatant number of 116 should be increased to at least 135 and should not be used arbitrarily to curtail the DDG-51 shipbuilding program or to force premature retirement of needed DD963s and FFGs.